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NFAC # 4135-81

## THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

SP - 153/81  
8 July 1981  
Copy 7MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central IntelligenceSUBJECT: Soviet Reactions to US Strategic Force Options ☐

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1. This memorandum responds to your interest in an estimate of possible Soviet reactions to alternatives under consideration by the Department of Defense for modernizing US strategic ballistic missile and bomber forces. As you requested, we have reviewed possible Soviet reactions and the requirements for such an estimate. The attachment describes the structure of the estimate and the material it would contain. (We call your attention to those parts of the attachment which are tabbed and highlighted.) ☐

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2. Of importance in planning preparation of the study is a target date for its completion. Press reports indicate that a decision by the Secretary of Defense on both our strategic missile and bomber programs is imminent suggesting that the estimate should be completed as soon as possible. We note that Secretary Weinberger informed you that he expects to have the MX basing alternative within a week. You therefore might want us to limit our assessment of Soviet reactions to US ballistic missile options to the alternative Secretary Weinberger chooses rather than assess possible Soviet reactions to the range of options considered by the DoD. On the other hand, the complexity and controversial nature of the two force planning issues may mean that whatever alternatives are chosen by the Secretary of Defense, the final decisions by the President and the Congress will not be made quickly. This would suggest that we have time to prepare a more detailed estimate. ☐

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3. A two-step approach for preparing the estimate outlined in the attachment seems most responsive to the present situation: After we receive a background briefing from DoD on US program options, we would take about two weeks to prepare an initial evaluation summarizing Soviet reactions in terms of weapon programs, characteristics and performance and operational employment. This study would be an NFAC product. We would produce in about two months an estimate which would address Soviet reactions to various US options. The more detailed estimate would be coordinated with other intelligence agencies. ☐

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-2-

SP - 153/81

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4. Your reactions to the suggested approach are requested, including your guidance as to whether we should limit our assessment of possible Soviet responses to US ballistic missile programs to the alternative selected by Secretary Weinberger.

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/s/ JOHN N. McMAHON

John N. McMahon

Attachment

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Next 7 Page(s) In Document Denied

3 August 1981

According to our most recent and admittedly imperfect information, the major U.S. strategic systems are scheduled for introduction as follows:

cruise missiles - 1982-83

Trident - 1982

MX - 1986, under the original MPS basing scheme